

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE REPORT

To: Planning Commission

From: Technical Committee

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DGA Number: L030277; Downtown (City Center) Chapter Update to Comprehensive Plan

Recommended Action: Amend the Downtown (City Center) Chapter of the Redmond Comprehensive Plan to update policies and land use districts for the neighborhood.

**Reasons the
Proposal should be**

Adopted:

The proposed amendment should be adopted because:

- It reflects the preferred growth strategy selected by City Council, and the updated vision, goals and framework policies.
- It refines policies to better reflect community vision for the downtown, as evidenced by: comments from the Planning Commission during study session discussions on the topic, citizen comments from public meetings, comments from members of the Greater Redmond Chamber of Commerce Land Use and Transportation Committees.
- It updates the existing City Center Chapter by eliminating obsolete policies, adding new pertinent policies, and improving readability.

I. APPLICANT PROPOSAL

A. Applicant

The City of Redmond

B. Reason for Proposal

As part of the City's major Comprehensive Plan update process, the subject Downtown Chapter is recommended to be revised by: eliminating polices that have already been achieved since the last revision to this chapter; revising some district boundaries and land use policies in order to support the City's recently adopted growth strategy through the year 2022; adding additional design related policies to foster compatibility with the City's future vision of the Downtown neighborhood; incorporating ideas from recent studies on the Downtown such as the Downtown Master Transportation Plan, Connecting Redmond events, and the Redmond Old Town Retail Analysis prepared by Urban Advisors; and to update the format of the chapter to be shorter and more readable.

The Growth Management Act requires that cities and counties planning under the Act must review and update comprehensive plans by December 2004. The 2003-4 Comprehensive Plan update is the first major review since the adoption of the plan in 1995. Over the next year, each of the Comprehensive Plan chapters is scheduled for review and update as needed to address the updated vision and framework policies, strategic issues facing the City, and current conditions.

II. RECOMMENDATION

The Technical Committee recommends amending the Downtown Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan as shown in Exhibit A.

Major updates in the recommendation compared to the existing City Center Chapter include the following:

- Changing the name of the neighborhood and chapter from City Center to Downtown;
- Reducing the land area of the existing three Convenience Commercial districts by incorporating the affected lands into adjoining Mixed-Use Residential /Office districts in order to support recently adopted growth strategy targets for the City;
- Reducing the existing Old Town District to a boundary that more closely corresponds to the recently adopted Historic Design Subarea;

- Adding the “River Trail” residential community north of NE 90th Street to the Downtown Neighborhood to reflect its connection and proximity to the Downtown;
- Adding new policies regarding the BNSF right-of-way within the neighborhood to guide future use of the right-of-way and its surroundings;
- Adding new policies to encourage the development of a High Capacity Transit Station Downtown;
- Adding new policies that encourage and enable the redevelopment of existing shopping center areas into mixed-use urban villages in order to support the recently adopted growth strategy;
- Adding a policy to encourage the redevelopment of the Downtown Park and Ride into a transit oriented development; and
- Adding new policies to address the desire to retain the quaint residential character of the Perrigo’s Plat area, by encouraging/allowing greater flexibility in land use in the existing bungalow structures, while also ensuring that new development/redevelopment in the area is consistent with the vision to maintain the quiet, residential, feeling and character of the area.

This amendment also includes minor revisions to format, language and organization to eliminate redundancy and improve clarity.

III. ALTERNATIVES

A. ISSUES CONSIDERED AND ALTERNATIVES

1. Update the policies of the City Center Chapter. The proposed updates are intended to:

- Reflect the preliminary preferred growth strategy selected by City Council, recent studies regarding downtown transportation and retail activity, and the values and priorities expressed by people at several public workshops and meetings.
- Update the policies to reflect issues and opportunities facing the City, especially the Downtown neighborhood.
- Make the policies shorter and clearer, eliminate redundancy, and avoid restating requirements of the Growth Management Act.

The Growth Management Act requires that all comprehensive plans be periodically updated. The last major update to the City Center Chapter (Downtown) was in 1995.

2. Don't update existing City Center Chapter: This alternative would not enable the City to: proactively encourage the development of more desired Downtown housing; reduce retail land use areas in the neighborhood that compete with the health and vitality of existing and future retail and entertainment uses in the Old Town and Town Center areas; positively state its' desire to obtain a regional High Capacity Transit Station in or near Downtown; or establish additional policies and guidelines for use and improvement of the BNSF right-of-way within the neighborhood.

B. COMPARISON WITH OTHER COMMUNITIES, APPROACHES

The Growth Management Act requires all cities and counties planning under the Act to review and update comprehensive plans by December 2004. Each community will determine what updates are needed to address changes in conditions and updated GMA requirements. The Kirkland and Bellevue Comprehensive Plans both include general policies for their downtowns as part of their land use chapters. Both of these communities have also recently prepared downtown implementation plans. Similar to Redmond, Bellevue is incorporating recommendations from their downtown implementation plan as part of their comprehensive plan update.

IV. SUPPORTING ANALYSIS: FACTS AND CONCLUSIONS

A. EXISTING CONDITIONS

In January 2003, the City Council selected one of three draft growth alternatives as a "preliminary preferred strategy" for growth in Redmond through 2022. The preferred strategy is the basis for further study and work in 2003 and 2004 to update the City's Comprehensive Plan and Community Development Guide.

The preferred growth strategy is based on two key goals:

- Improve the supply and diversity of new housing in Redmond to not only provide more opportunities for people to live closer to work, but also to meet better the needs of people of various ages and incomes, from young adults to seniors.
- Emphasize land use and transportation strategies to reduce the traffic impacts associated with more growth.

While the preferred growth strategy emphasizes these two goals, it also continues to support other elements of the community's adopted vision, including a quality natural environment, lively and walkable Downtown, and healthy economy. Currently, 46,000 people live in Redmond and 72,000 people work here. The initial estimate of growth under the preferred strategy includes 19,700 additional residents and roughly 22,000 more people working in Redmond by 2022.

With the exception of a minor amendment to the Mixed/Use Shopping Center (Town Center) district, in 2001, to allow an increase in commercial floor area from 1.49 million square feet without Transfer Development Rights to 1.80 million square feet with the use of Transfer Development Rights to facilitate the development of the new Bon Macy's and Marriot Hotel, the existing City Center neighborhood goals and policies have remained unchanged since 1995. The Existing Policies are attached as Exhibit C, for reference and comparison to the recommended update. These policies have worked very well for the Downtown neighborhood and have guided significant physical change and growth in the Downtown until now. Many of the goals and policies that were established in 1993, and amended in 1995, have been substantially or completely achieved, like existing policies FCC-17, FCC-18, and CC-68 for example.

Additionally, new development in the Downtown neighborhood within the past 5 to 10 years, along with recent inquiries from prospective Downtown developers, gives us clear indications that Downtown Redmond is a desirable place to live, work, shop, and develop. As such, the existing vision for Downtown is recommend to remain intact, with minor updates to policy language, and with minor boundary adjustments to the existing land use districts to ensure Downtown Redmond will continue to move forward in terms of becoming more lively, and more pedestrian friendly, neighborhood over time.

B: Planning Commission Study Sessions on Recommended Updates

In September of 2003, the Planning Commission met with planning staff to discuss the Staff's preliminary recommendations for updates to the Downtown Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. Through those meetings the Planning Commission developed an Issues Matrix to keep track of issues that were of interest to the Planning Commission and to keep track of the direction the Planning Commission desired to give staff for its consideration in updating the Downtown Chapter amendment. The Planning Commission ended its' study sessions on the subject November 11, 2003. The final Issues Matrix is included as Exhibit D. The matrix has been modified to refer the reader to the subject Policy #s, or maps, which the subject issues are addressed through, as well as to provided some description of the recommended change and rationale for the recommendation. The right hand column is reserved for recording Planning Commission outcomes.

C: Compliance with Criteria for Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations Amendments:

The following is an analysis of how this proposal complies with the Comprehensive Plan and requirements for amendments.

Redmond Comprehensive Plan Policy LU – 142 sets out the following Comprehensive Plan amendment criteria:

- 1. Consistency with Growth Management Act (GMA), state of Washington Department of Community Trade and Economic Development Procedural Criteria, and the King County Countywide Planning Policies;**

The Growth Management Act urban growth goal, in RCW 36.70A.020(1), encourages development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be efficiently provided. The GMA's second goal calls for reducing the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development. The fourth goal of the GMA is to encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of the state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types. The existing City Center Chapter, along with the recommended updates to the policies and land use districts, are designed to specifically meet these goals. The purpose of the proposed amendments is to adjust the land use policies to enable future zoning and development regulation revisions, to better achieve these goals. Specifically, revising land use district boundaries and policies to encourage higher density mixed-use development where there is currently low density convenience commercial uses will allow for greater compact, urban, density and intensity in the designated urban core.

2. Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan Policies and the designation criteria;

The amendments are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The City's vision for Downtown relies upon long-term economic vitality and growth to provide a variety of retail, residential, and office uses. FW 20 encourages development of a unique, attractive and economically healthy downtown that reflects Redmond's history and natural setting, while offering a variety of retail, office, service, residential, cultural and recreational opportunities. City Center Policy CC-5 encourages the development of housing in and adjacent to the Downtown neighborhood to support business activities and to increase the vitality of the area. City Center Policy CC-6 encourages a mix of housing and choices to create variety in residential opportunities and to make the Downtown a "people place" in the early morning, daytime and evening hours. The proposed amendments are designed to support, and better implement, these policies by ensuring that the land use mix does not lean too heavily toward retail and convenience commercial uses in the future.

3. The capability of the land including prevalence of sensitive areas;

Most all of the land within the Downtown has been developed or prepared for development with the provision of streets and basic utilities, although some additional utility and street improvements may be required to serve new developments. The prevalent sensitive areas within the neighborhood are the shorelines along Bear Creek and the Sammamish River, and the aquifer recharge area that lies under most of the neighborhood. The City's existing sensitive area, shoreline, and wellhead protection regulations provide adequate protection of these sensitive areas and guidance for development within the sensitive area jurisdictions. The proposed amendments are intended in part to encourage more efficient use of existing developed areas and should not increase the amount of impervious surface in the Downtown.

4. Consistency with the preferred growth and development pattern in Section B of the Land Use Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan;

The policy direction in the proposed amendment concerning the preferred growth and development pattern is consistent with the existing Comprehensive Plan. As there is a finite amount of land within the urban core, adjusting the land use policies (and subsequent regulations) is necessary to ensure that the permitted uses allowed in each sub-neighborhood do not inadvertently preclude the development of the most desired uses for certain locations by allowing too wide a range of competing uses.

5. The capacity of the public facilities and whether public facilities and services can be provided cost-effectively at the intensity allowed by the designation;

The proposed amendments will most likely require increases in public facilities needs as more potential housing/office development opportunities will be encouraged. Three to four million more square feet of residential or office space could be added over time with the proposed amendment. Facility needs will be further addressed through work currently underway on facility plan updates, including the sewer master plan and Transportation Master Plan.

6. Whether the allowed uses are compatible with the nearby uses;

The amendments are aimed at ensuring greater long-term compatibility between uses.

7. If the purpose of the amendment is to change the allowed use in an area, the need for the land uses that would be allowed by the Comprehensive Plan amendment and whether the amendment would result in the loss of the capacity to meet other needed land uses, especially whether the proposed amendment complies with the policy on a no-net loss of housing capacity; and

The proposed changes to land use boundaries would generally encourage development of more housing through redevelopment of existing single-story shopping center and strip mall developments by increasing the development potential of those lands. The boundary changes would increase the development potential of the affected properties, but would also decrease opportunities for redevelopment with competing uses (single-story retail and drive-through uses) on the same land. Although the proposed amendment would reduce the capacity for convenience commercial uses in the neighborhood, it would not reduce the allowed capacity of convenience commercial uses below a point that would not sufficiently meet the average needs for the community, including other general commercial land use areas outside of the Downtown neighborhood.

- 8. For issues that have been considered within the last four annual updates or comprehensive land use plan amendments, whether there has been a change in circumstances that makes the proposed plan designation or policy change appropriate or whether the amendment is needed to remedy a mistake.**

This question is not applicable. These issues have not been considered within the last four annual updates.

V. AUTHORITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL, PUBLIC AND AGENCY REVIEW

A. Subject matter jurisdiction:

The Redmond Planning Commission and the Redmond City Council have subject matter jurisdiction to hear and decide whether to adopt the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

B. Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA):

A Determination of Non-Significance and SEPA Checklist was issued for this non-project action.

C. 60-Day State Agency Review:

State agencies were sent an initial 60-day notice of Redmond's proposed major Comprehensive Plan amendments in December 2002, and will be sent the specific proposed policy updates for the Downtown Chapter by February 27, 2004.

D. Public Involvement:

Staff met with members of two subcommittees of the Greater Redmond Chamber of Commerce to discuss Staff's preliminary recommendations during the last quarter of 2003. On January 26, 2004, Staff held a public meeting regarding the Perrigo's Plat area (bounded by NE 85th Street, NE 80th Street, 164th Ave. NE and 166th Ave. NE) with property owners in the subject area, and concerned citizens. Approximately 40 people were in attendance of that meeting.

The public has additional opportunities to comment through the Planning Commission review process and public hearing.

E. Appeals:

RCDG 20F.30.55 identifies Comprehensive Plan Amendments as a Type VI permit. Final action is held by the City Council. The action of the City Council on a Type VI proposal may be appealed by filing a petition with the Growth Management Hearing Board pursuant to the requirements

VI. LIST OF EXHIBITS

Exhibit A: Redmond Comprehensive Plan Amendments – Proposed Downtown Chapter

Exhibit B: Determination of Non-Significance and SEPA Checklist

Exhibit C: Existing City Center Chapter

Exhibit D: Issues Tracking Matrix

Roberta Lewandowski, Planning Director Date

Dave Rhodes, Public Works Director Date

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